A STUDY OF FAMILIAL BOND AND DIVERGENCE IN MANJU KAPUR'S SELECT NOVELS

A SYNOPSIS

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JAYAJOTHILAKSHMI V

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ANAND NAGAR, KRISHNANKOIL–626 126

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a dynamic world characterised by perpetual change, families persist as unwavering constants, providing solace, support, and a sense of belonging. The intricate threads of familial ties, woven with care and understanding, collectively form a tapestry of love and resilience that enriches our lives. The family unit stands as a foundational institution, imparting essential life lessons and moral values to individuals. Within the circle of family, culture and values are nurtured. This system guides an individual towards personal growth and gaining respect in the human society. Families serve as crucial conduits for cultural inheritance, allowing individuals to perpetuate virtues such as reverence for elders, unity, honesty, hard work, and trust. The familial environment becomes a primary channel through which cultural and moral principles are transmitted across generations. Emotional bonds act as an adhesive that binds lives together, drawing strength from love and affection. Through the intricate language of emotions, family members impart valuable lessons on right and wrong, thus facilitating the transmission of moral principles that shape the character and conduct of successive generations. Inspite of all these, deviations occur in an individual which bring a vase change in the family setting and the bonding. The cause of deviations may vary on each circumstance, but the way if affects the family leads to emotional and mental disturbance. This is revealed through major incidents taken from the select works.

The present research is closely aligned with the analysis and comparative study of family life, emotional connections, and the psychological analysis of characters, exploring the characters' state of conflict as portrayed in Manju Kapur's select novels. Through the above key concepts, familial deviation in *Difficult Daughters* [1], family sacrifices in *Home* [2], parents' separation and children's desperate state in *Custody* [3], and generation differences in a family as portrayed in *Brothers* [4] are explored. The study systematically examines and contrasts the characters within these literary works, evaluating their objectives, characteristics, and identities. It provides a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted aspects of family dynamics and individual's impact within the familial structures as depicted in Manju Kapur's writings.

A notable aspect of Manju Kapur's narrative prowess is her adept portrayal of the nuclear family, juxtaposed with the intricacies of the joint family system in the selected works. The research meticulously analyses these dynamics, highlighting the interplay between nuclear and joint family structures, showcasing their impact on one another. The author's narrative finesse is evident in the nuanced depiction of nuclear families, attributing significance to their roles without sacrificing the emotional depth among family members. The emotional undercurrents, portrayed as the foundation of actions, serve as a common thread in both family structures, leading to pivotal turning points.

The research, utilising Manju Kapur's works as primary sources, aims to achieve several key objectives. It investigates changing lifestyles, individual goal-setting, and the psychological aspects of characters within the context of familial narratives. Additionally, the study delves into the post-marriage deviations and the impact of divorce on children. Employing conceptual frameworks derived from noteworthy theories, the research seeks to explore overarching themes such as the significance of familial bond, societal restrictions, the defiance of societal norms, and the varied success and failures of individuals within the family milieu. The hypothesis of the research lies in the necessity to find whether family serves as a backbone of an individual's growth or it causes deviations. Parent's emotional system interconnected with the children's emotions and future is presented through the concepts chosen from the theories.

This research goes beyond the protagonists, encompassing the entire spectrum of family members and their collective actions, which play integral roles in the daily life of the family. The overarching analysis underscores that the family, far from being a hindrance, serves as a wellspring of strength and an essential partner in the pursuit of individual goals and aspirations. It asserts that the enduring emotional bonds within families act as a moral compass, providing the fortitude needed to navigate the complexities of life. In essence, this study affirms the irreplaceable role of families within our social fabric, emphasizing their pivotal contribution to individual growth and societal resilience.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indira's [5] article on marriage highlights the protagonist's perception of marriage as the culmination of her life's journey in the novel *Difficult Daughters*. Despite the identity she had in her father's family, she loses it and struggles to carve out a space for herself. The author emphasises that she remains on the periphery, marginalised, and labeled as a mere companion by her husband. Marriage is portrayed as the zenith of her life.

Shobana [6] notes how Manju Kapur connects the situation in a home and a girl's life to larger patterns, highlighting the uncertain style and flat tone occasionally redeemed by quiet amusement in the novel *Home*. The article underscores how the narrative in *Home* fluctuates between rapid reporting and descriptions of weddings and other rituals, portraying them as immobile events that are presented as typical occurrences in India.

Pew [7] explores Manju Kapur's feminist perspectives in the novel *Custody*. Here the protagonists transcend traditional boundaries, forging their own identities. In *Custody*, the two main characters do not necessarily rebel against the patriarchal world; rather, they navigate it through a psychological lens. The novel adeptly portrays the distinct lifestyles and identities of these two women. Pew asserts that feminism, as depicted in the novel, takes on a unique form through the characters.

Arpita [8] examines scenes of crime committed against women in selected novels by Manju Kapur. The analysis highlights how violence against women is depicted not only within domestic settings but also in the broader external world. Arpita emphasises that women face denial of proper education as children are subsequently exploited through their bodies as adults.

Sweetline and Senthamarai [9] concentrate on the quest for distinct female identity, addressing issues of gender discrimination and women's struggle within a patriarchal society. Their analysis delves into the challenges faced by women in a patriarchal and traditional setting, emphasising issues such as marriage, economic and social suppression, and the lack of fundamental rights, individuality, and self-

sufficiency in a male-dominated society. The study brings to light Manju Kapur's portrayal of women's lives, their struggles for rights, and their quest for identity.

In their article, Naresh and Uma [10] delve into the struggle of women for identity and autonomy, drawing insights from the novels of Manju Kapur. The analysis aims to explore the evolution of women in India over a specific period and their current status. The authors examine the challenges faced by modern women, exploring their problems and sufferings through the characters in novels such as *Difficult Daughters* and *Home*.

Baby [11] delves into human emotions, particularly focusing on the dynamics of man-woman relationships in Manju Kapur's literary works. The study covers aspects such as financial status, carnal desires, and personal longings as portrayed in novels like *Difficult Daughters*, *Home*, *The Immigrant*, and *Custody*. Maheswari analyzes Kapur's depiction of female characters, exploring the contrast between traditional and modern portrayals. The article emphasizes the theme of female characters experiencing a form of slavery within marital relationships.

In her article, Sangeetha [12] explores the psychological conflicts experienced by two children as a consequence of their parents' failed marriage projected in the novel *Custody*. The narrative unveils the unforeseen uncertainties inherent in matrimony and sheds light on the struggles endured by children amidst the challenges of divorce. The article portrays the authentic essence of contemporary marriages grappling with the weight of individualism. It captures the wife's feelings of suffocation, the husband's apprehension of loneliness, and the ongoing disruptions in the lives of the children with meticulous sincerity.

2.1 Research Gap

After reviewing many journal articles and books, the following research gaps are noted.

- The importance of family life, portrayal of joint and nuclear families, the emotional bond among family members and the repercussions of its breakdown have not been discussed.

- The psychological analysis of characters, their behavior's reflection on others' lives in the family, and their conflict state have not been the primary focus.

- While the struggle and freedom of women are extensively discussed, the negative aspects of self-independence are not overlooked.

- There is a greater emphasis on problems in marriage life rather than the post-marriage dissolution and the impact of parents' role on children's future.

- Despite discussions on women empowerment and their lives in a patriarchal world, infertility-related mental pressure on women is rarely addressed.

- There is a lack of available literature discussing the themes of the novel *Brothers*.

3. Objectives

The main objectives of the research work are:

- To highlight the deviations in family bonding, the pre-marriage and the post-marriage deviations in Manju Kapur's select novels.

- To emphasise the necessity of emotional bonding, the impact of family members' psyche on one another and conflict resolution in Manju Kapur's narratives through theoretical frameworks.

- To illustrate how Manju Kapur emphasises self-development amidst family identity, challenges and distance in relationships.

- To analyse the impact of divorce on children and their subsequent future through the characters in the novels.

4. Research Problem

The overarching research problem revolves around understanding the changing dynamics of family life, particularly in the context of shifting lifestyles and contrasting individual goals against the backdrop of familial influence. The central problem explores changing lifestyles, individual goal-setting against family influence, and the psychological factors contributing to deviations in familial relationships. The research aims to provide insights into the complexities of family dynamics, offering a nuanced understanding of the necessity for emotional connectedness and the mechanisms for addressing conflicts within the familial framework.

Furthermore, the study places a particular emphasis on the practical implications of maintaining familial bonds amidst the challenges presented by evolving family dynamics. It seeks to identify and analyse the mechanism which the characters employ within the familial framework to address conflicts, offering valuable insights into effective conflict resolution strategies. By adhering to rigorous scholarly standards, this research aspires to contribute not only to the comprehension of contemporary family dynamics but also to the broader discourse on the complexities of sustaining emotional connections within families.

4.1 Research Method

The research method used for the study is qualitative method and hence critical evaluation of the characters and thematic representations in the select works of Manju Kapur are reflected. Identity, unconscious and conscious reflection of mind, power of emotions, divorce, children's mentality, man-woman relationship, gender discrimination within family are all illustrated through in depth reading of the works. With the select works as primary, collected secondary sources, articles and journal references are used to highlight the research.

To evaluate the emotional bond of the characters and the consequences they face while avoiding the bond is paralleled with Bowen's Family Systems Theory. Out of the eight concepts of Bowen, the select four concepts of Murray Bowen – Triangle, Differentiation of Self, Family Projection Process and Emotional Cutoff

are taken to analyse the concept using the select novels of Manju Kapur. In a culture where the family unit serves as the cornerstone of identity, emotional connections play a pivotal role in shaping individual experiences and societal norms. Against this backdrop, Bowen's theory offers a framework to unravel the threads that bind families together. It explores the delicate balance between autonomy and togetherness. Through this, the research illuminates the interwoven nature of emotional bonds within the Indian family context from ancient to modern time, emphasizing their potency compared to individual pursuits. Bowen's theoretical framework, with its insights into characters' innate nature and the essential role of emotional bonds, provide a lens through which the dynamics of Indian family life is explored, underscoring the enduring strength of emotional connections in the Indian family structure through Manju Kapur's works.

Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory is used to evaluate the intricate web of human tendencies and the ripple effect of one's behavior on others, ultimately leading to significant transformation in family life and individual well-being. This thematic exploration forms a rich tapestry within Manju Kapur's novels, shedding light on the interplay of human behavior, familial dynamics, and the ever-evolving psyche. Analysing human mentality takes center stage, shedding light on how individuals navigate the complexities of their minds in the face of life's trials and tribulations. Unmasking the layers of personality aligns with Freud's quest to unearth the hidden aspects of the human psyche, offering insights into the complexities of our behaviour, desires, and inner conflicts.

By employing Conflict Resolution theory, the text illuminates the effective methods for managing family conflicts and discerns between solutions that bring about resolution and those that lead to disastrous consequences. Successfully navigating through conflict in a manner aligned with this theory is shown to be instrumental in restoring family peace. Manju Kapur's novels, through their exploration of conflict theory, provide a compelling lens through which readers can examine how individuals and families grapple with conflict. The consequences result in illustrating that conflict is a fundamental aspect of human existence that reverberates through the intricate fabric of familial and societal relationships.

4.2 Results

- First and foremost, it's crucial to recognize that family is not a burden but rather a source of essential qualities such as care, support, protection, and comfort. These qualities form the bedrock of our emotional and psychological well-being, enriching our lives in countless ways.

- Secondly, family is not an obstacle to personal goals and aspirations. Indeed, they can be powerful allies, providing encouragement and a sense of purpose. The key lies in finding a balance between familial responsibilities and personal ambitions, allowing individuals to pursue their goals while maintaining strong family bonds.

- Thirdly, the necessity of family in various aspects of life, focusing on the interplay between individual psyche, emotional connections, and conflict resolution within family units to underscore its significance.

- Achieving one's goal often necessitates some degree of relaxation in familial bond, enabling a laser-like focus on those aspirations. However, it is vital to strike a balance, as complete emotional cutoff from one's family can lead to isolation and hinder one's path to success.

- Every behaviour and decision taken, whether consciously or not, impacts other family members. This interconnection between family and individual' psyche is evident.

- The recurring theme across the novels discussed, along with the psychological concepts explored, reinforces the notion that families are integral to our identity and progress.

- The delicate balance between familial bonds and individual goal is crucial for success, as family serves as a source of care, protection, and emotional strength.

- The portrayal of familial support in these novels sheds light on the significance of these relationships in guiding characters toward ethical

behaviour. Whether by providing moral guidance, emotional support, or serving as a foundation for personal growth, family support remains an influential and multifaceted aspect of shaping individual' moral integrity and ethical decisions.

4.3 Conclusion

In examining the intricate and multifaceted role of family dynamics in literature and real life, it becomes evident that familial bonds play an integral role in shaping individual identity, moral compass, and the paths one chooses to pursue. In a world characterized by constant change, families remain the constants, offering solace, support, and belonging. Families are far from being a burden; they are reservoirs of care, protection, and comfort. These qualities form the bedrock of our emotional and psychological well-being, making families indispensable. The multifaceted discussions in the core chapters have underscored the paramount importance of families in our lives and within society at large.

Bowen’s Family Systems Theory has been applied to bring out the statement that a person’s deviation from the family for self-development or finding an identity will not be successful always. Family’s support is necessary in one way or another to live with self-respect in the society. All the concepts of Bowen are interconnected with the basis of emotion among family members and prove the importance of relationships in one’s life. It describes both the positive and negative aspects of emotional bond and the consequences an individual faces when leaving the bond to find an identity.

Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory is utilised to explore the mentality and psyche of the characters in the novels, along with the consequences of their actions. The 'Id' reflects the characters' personal desires in a negative sense, highlighting the impact on the family and ensuing consequences. The theory's three elements elucidate the necessity of personal qualities within the family for its reputation, pride, and social well-being. The application of Freud's theory projects the connection between human psyche and family harmony. The interplay of the Superego, Id, and Ego concepts within the context of family elucidates how familial bonds serve as a compass for ethical behavior and decision-making.

The study concludes how conflict alters a family system, utilising conflict resolution theory to highlight the various impacts and effects on the family structure. Overall, the novels illustrate the multifaceted nature of familial support, portraying it as a guiding force that shapes characters' moral compass and influences their ethical conduct. The stories emphasise the enduring influence of family bonds on individual' identity and ethical choices, marking the family as a pivotal aspect in the moral development of characters. The exploration of family system, conflict resolution, and the interplay of psychological concepts within familial relationship highlight the profound impact of these relationships on personal growth and societal fabric. The study focuses on the parent-child relationship, their behaviour's reflection on each other and the consequences of illicit act. Family, as a cornerstone of society, requires careful navigation and understanding, emphasising the pivotal role of effective conflict resolution for sustained strength, harmony, and individual well-being within the family unit.

4.4 Limitations

- The study primarily emphasises family and emotional bonds, neglecting the exploration of individual role within the societal framework.
- Not all characters receive detailed scrutiny, limiting the application of theories to a select few, necessitating a more targeted approach to relevant characters.
- While the novels heavily highlight the struggle for education, the study lacks emphasis on the impact of education post-marriage. This is due to the predominant focus on emotional bonds, impact individual's psyche on others, and family conflict resolution.
- The individual's role in society beyond the family dynamic remains unexplored, diminishing the broader societal implications portrayed in Manju Kapur's works.

5. Organization of the Thesis

The whole study is organized into five chapters including introduction and conclusion chapters. The detailed description of the chapters is given below.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter serves as a comprehensive initiation to the thesis. It begins by setting the context with an overview of Indian writing in English, introducing the notable positioning of Manju Kapur among contemporary women writers. This chapter further delves into the life and writing career of the author, highlighting her success as a novelist within the literary landscape. It incorporates a literature review, outlining the existing body of work on the subject, and explicitly states the aim and objectives of the study. It focuses on the outline of the select novels for the research. Moreover, it provides an outline of the forthcoming chapters, giving readers a preview of the content to be explored and analysed throughout the thesis.

Chapter 2: Indian Family Structure and Emotional Bond: A Bowenian Perspective

Chapter two extensively explores the significance of emotional bonds within the context of the Indian family structure, employing Bowen's Family System Theory. Within this chapter, the characters' affections towards their families, their aspirations, struggles, and the impact of emotional ties within both joint and nuclear family frameworks are meticulously analysed and brought to light. The chapter delves into the conflicts that arise due to the juxtaposition of individual identities within the family unit. It extensively applies Bowen Family System theory to assess the characters' emotional landscapes and the diversions or deviations experienced within the familial context. This chapter centers its focus on the examination of the emotional bonds prevalent among family members. It extensively explores how an individual's pursuit of personal identity often results in differentiation from the established family structure. The analysis aims to illuminate the intricate balance between personal identity aspirations and the cohesion within the family which is relevant to Bowen's [13] idea that family is an emotional unit.

The Indian family exerts a profound influence on an individual's behaviour, serving as a primary crucible where values, norms, and social expectations are transmitted. The evolving landscape of the Indian family system signifies more than just lifestyle changes; it marks a profound transformation in emotional connections. Manju Kapur's literary works delve into various facets of family dynamics, encompassing themes such as marriage, post-marriage experiences, sacrifices, shaping children's future, the roles of men in the family, and women's endeavours to achieve their aspirations. Drawing insights from Manju Kapur's novels and integrating key family theory, the researcher conducts a thorough analysis of the intricate interplay between emotions, family structures, and their enduring influence on individual freedom.

From examining the impact of family dynamics in novels like *Difficult Daughter, Home, Custody*, and *Brothers* by delving into Bowen's concepts such as triangle, differentiation of self, family projection process and emotional cutoff, it becomes evident that families wield significant influence over our lives. Thus, family is essential in success, offering vital emotional strength and motivation that other relationships may lack.

Chapter 3: Unveiling Psyche: Analysing Family Relationships through Psychoanalytic Lens

This chapter utilises Freud's 'Psychoanalytic Theory' to assess the characters within the framework of their family life. By employing the concepts of the id, ego, and superego, it unveils the concealed thoughts and underlying motivations of these characters. This exploration aims to reveal how the psyche of each individual significantly influences their feelings towards others. The analysis further highlights the interconnectedness within a family, emphasizing that every action taken by a person has a substantial impact on other family members or those in close proximity.

In the realm of literary analysis, psychology plays a pivotal role in dissecting literary works, understanding the characters within them, and deciphering the author's underlying thoughts and motivations. This analytical lens enables readers to connect with and relate to the central characters of a story.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory [14] serves as a tool for the analysis of the unconscious mind. Human minds operate on two fundamental principles: the 'Pleasure Principle', which interprets individuals as seeking pleasure in their actions, and the 'Reality Principle', which relates human to societal norms and moral values. In the literary works of Manju Kapur, the characters and their behaviours assume critical roles, reshaping the destinies of both familiar individuals and strangers, whether by conscious or unconscious means. Through her stories, the readers glimpse the reflection of social conditions on emotions, thoughts, desires, conflicts and the kaleidoscope of human behaviours and personalities. This chapter puts forth how different behaviours and nature of each character affect the entire family system and what makes it to sustain with same structure.

Chapter 4: Harmonizing Goals and Family: Conflict's Unseen Dimensions

This chapter presents the conflict present within familial structures and the various methods aimed at its eradication, whether through mutual concern or sacrifices using Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Resolution Theory [15]. It elaborates on the situations that often lead to conflicts and the essentiality of addressing and resolving them through diverse approaches. The chapter underscores the importance of balancing individual goals with familial duties. It delves into the evaluation of conflict resolution through the experiences of different characters, encompassing the presence of generation and gender conflicts within the family dynamics.

By employing Thomas-Kilmann's theory, the text illuminates the effective methods for managing family conflicts and discerns between solutions that bring about resolution and those that lead to disastrous consequences. Successfully navigating through conflict in a manner aligned with this theory is shown to be instrumental in restoring family peace. The chapter highlights the paramount importance of the family unit during times of conflict and underscores the significance of preserving familial bonds by addressing and resolving conflicts. It acknowledges that at times, conflict within the family may strain or even break these bonds. Nevertheless, it stresses the imperative need for the same family members to come together to resolve issues and maintain the cohesion of the family unit.

Manju Kapur's literary narratives intricately connect family with the concept of conflict. Conflict, in its various forms and intensities, plays a central role in shaping her stories and the lives of her characters. These conflicts often stem from differences in desires, ambitions, and values, with themes like sibling rivalries, generation gaps, and marital disputes being common in her works. Furthermore, the chapter meticulously examines the conflicts arising from the coexistence of traditional and modern livelihoods within a family, offering a comprehensive analysis of the complex interplay between these contrasting lifestyles. Through her narratives, Manju Kapur demonstrates that conflict is an integral part of the human experience, often most acutely felt and explored within the family unit. The chosen approach to addressing problems significantly impacts the family's well-being, emphasising the importance of mutual understanding and familial support.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The final chapter serves as a conclusive discussion, summarizing the overall outcomes and highlighting the key findings derived from the study. It consolidates the significant discoveries and insights obtained throughout the research process. Additionally, this section pinpoints and discusses the limitations that were encountered during the study, acknowledging the boundaries or constraints within the research. Furthermore, it identifies areas of research that remain unexplored or warrant further investigation, presenting suggestions and recommendations for future studies to bridge these research gaps.

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